



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**JOINT STATEMENT DELIVERED BY ESTHER VAN NES, CHARGÉE D'AFFAIRES
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World Refugee Day

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Madame Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the United Kingdom, and my own country, Canada.

In marking World Refugee Day, we stand in solidarity with millions of refugees and renew our commitment to addressing their humanitarian needs, addressing the root causes of forced displacement and finding lasting solutions.

According to UNHCR's *Global Trends* report, global displacement nearly doubled over the past decade. Persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, and natural disasters have forcibly displaced more than 123 million people. [Within](#) the OSCE region alone, nearly 25 million individuals are either forcibly displaced or stateless.

The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine remains the main driver of mass displacement in the OSCE region, resulting in the largest cross-border movement of people in Europe since the Second World War. UNHCR's May [report](#) notes that nearly 5.6 million individuals have fled Ukraine, with over 3.7 million internally displaced. Continued large-scale attacks, including strikes on energy infrastructure and continued aerial assaults on residential areas are fuelling urgent humanitarian needs and preventing Ukrainians from returning to their homes and families. Women and children make up the majority of the refugee population who have fled the conflict, with 63 per cent being women and girls, and 33 per cent being children. This demographic profile raises specific protection concerns, particularly around gender-based violence, trafficking, and exploitation.

In the [Istanbul Document](#)¹ 1999, participating States reaffirmed our commitment to respect the right to seek asylum and to ensure the international protection of refugees as set out in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as to facilitate the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons in dignity and safety.

In a time of uncertainty, we must continue to uphold these commitments.

In addressing forcible displacement, we must strive to reach the most in need and the most vulnerable, including women and girls, LGBTQI+ people, religious minorities and others directly affected by conflict or displacement. We must also confront parallel risks and challenges, including trafficking, exploitation, discrimination, and intolerance.

We must also remember that inclusive societies are secure societies and recognize the positive impact that newcomers can have for our societies and economies.

As we mark World Refugee Day, we honour the strength and resilience of refugees and recognize their valuable contributions to the communities that welcome them.